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ABSTRACT

This fact sheet provides information related to school-age children's out-of-school time. The fact sheet summarizes findings of research related to the following topics: (1) families' need for supervision of children and youth; (2) types of after school activities; (3) demographic information on children in America; (4) links between children's health and safety indicators and unsupervised time; (5) the variety of programs available to meet children's needs for after-school care and education; (6) the benefits of high quality after-school programs; (7) links between after-school program participation rates and positive outcomes; (8) the costs of after-school care; (9) the increase in public support for after-school programs; and (10) the growth of public and private funding for after-school care and education programs. (Contains 54 references.) (KB)

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National Institute on Out-of-School Time
Center for Research on Women
Wellesley College

March 2001

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Fact Sheet on School-Age Children's Out-of-School Time

Families Need Supervision for Children and Youth

According to a recent poll, 71% of voters say it is difficult for parents to find after-school programs in America; 60% say it is difficult for parents to find afterschool programs in their communities (Afterschool Alliance, June 2000).

The U.S. General Accounting Office estimates that in the year 2002, the current number of out-of-school time programs for school-age children will meet as little as 25% of the demand in some urban areas (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1998).

In 69% of all married-couple families with children ages 6 to 17, both parents work outside of the home. In 71% of single-mother families and 85% of single-father families with children ages 6 to 17, the custodial parent works outside of the home (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000).

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time indicates that there are approximately 8 million children ages 5 to 14 that spend time without adult supervision on a regular basis. This number includes 4 million children between the ages of 5 and 12 and another estimated 4 million children ages 13 and 14. These figures rise markedly as children age (Miller, 1999, Hofferth & Jankuniene, 2000).

More than 70% of employed parents who spend more than 40 hours per week on the job feel that they do not have enough time with their children (Appleseed Today, U.S. Dept. of Education, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1998).

Kids are left unsupervised for a number of hours each week. The time differential between when children leave school and when parents get home from work can amount to 20-25 hours per week (James et al., 1999).

The number of children living in working-poor families increased from 4.3 million 1989 to 5.8 million in 1998 (working-poor families are defined

as families where at least one parent worked 50 or more weeks a year and the income was below the poverty level (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2000).

Children spend only 20% of their waking time in school, because public schools meet only for 6 hours per day, 180 days per year. This leaves 185 days and many hours each day free—a time of both risk and opportunity (The Future of Children, 1999; Miller et al., 1997).

Children Spend Time After School in A Variety of Ways

Recent data comparing children's use of time in 1997 to 1981 indicates that children are spending more time on household work, sports, studying, in school, and in personal care activities, and less time playing, eating, watching television, in outdoor activities, and having household conversations (Hofferth & Sandberg, 1998).

Children spend an average of almost three hours per day watching television, and 17% of children regularly watch more than five hours of television per day (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1999).

The average amount of time children (ages 2-17) spend using television, computers, video games, or VCR totals 4.8 hours per day, or 33.6 hours per week (Stanger & Grindina, 1999).

Between 1981 and 1997, the time boys spent on studying increased 50%, while the amount of time girls spent increased 16%. In 1997, boys and girls ages 6-8 spent an average of 22 minutes per weekday studying, while boys and girls ages 9-12 spent an average of 39 minutes and 37 minutes, respectively. Black and Hispanic children spent more time studying than non-Hispanic white children; family income is not related to time spent studying (Hofferth & Sandberg, 1998).

Children Today

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in the year 2000, there were 51.5 million school-age children living in the United States; children ages 5 to 13 were estimated at 35.8 million and children ages 14 to 17 were numbered at 15.7 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001)

America's children continue to grow in racial and ethnic diversity. In 1999, 65% were white, non-Hispanic; 15% were black, non-Hispanic; 16% were Hispanic; 4% were Asian/Pacific Islander; and 1% were American Indian/Alaska Native (America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2000)

In 1998, 29% of children lived in families with incomes less than 150% of the poverty level, or \$24,990 a year on average for a family of four (America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2000).

Poor outcomes associated with poverty include: decreased IQ, decreased academic achievement, increased fatal accidental injuries, increased iron deficiency, and increased dropout rates (Child Trends, 1999; Children's Defense Fund, 1998; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997)

The gap in average math scores between 9 year-olds in high-poverty schools and low-poverty schools was 22 points in 1996, down from a 28-point gap in 1992. The gap in average reading scores between 9 year-olds in high and low-poverty schools was 38 points in 1996, down from a 40-point gap in 1992. This represents a three to four-grade level gap in student performance (U.S. Department of Education, 1998)

84% percent of households with children in very poor urban neighborhoods do not have a computer; 20% do not have a phone; Half of the children in low-income urban areas live in households that do not have a car (13% all children) (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2000)

From a study of 17 developed countries, the US had the highest child poverty at 22% and the next highest Australia was nearly 50% lower at 14% (Rainwater, et al., 1995).

Children's Health & Safety

According to the National Safe Kids Campaign, nearly 4.5 million children 14 and younger are injured in their homes every year and most unintentional injury related deaths occur when children are out of school and unsupervised (Karasik, S., 2000).

Children without adult supervision are at significantly greater risk of truancy from school, stress, receiving poor grades, risk-taking behavior, and substance use. Children who spend more hours on their own and begin self-care at younger ages are at increased risk of poor outcomes (Dwyer, et al., 1990; Pettit, et al., 1997)

On school days between 3PM to 6PM, the occurrence of violent juvenile crimes such as murders, sexual assaults, robberies, and assaults, triples. (Sickmund et al., 1997).

According to a 1999 study by the U.S. Department of Justice, children are at greater risk of being victims of violent crime in the four hours after the end of the school day, roughly 2PM to 6PM (Snyder, et al., 1999).

A study of the relationship between parental monitoring, adult supervision and problem behaviors among ninth graders living in California found that youth who lacked adult supervision after school had more problem behaviors such as substance use, risk taking, depressed mood, and poorer grades, than did youth who were supervised by an adult (Richardson et al., 1993).

Children's television viewing has been associated with lower reading achievement, behavioral problems, and increased aggression. When children watch more than three hours a day of television or watch violent programs, the incidence of these behavioral and learning risks increases (Miller, 1995).

The three major effects on children of seeing violence on television are: 1) children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, 2) children may be more fearful of the world around them, and 3) children may be more likely to behave in aggressive ways toward others (American Psychological Association, 2001).

The prevalence of pediatric obesity has doubled in the past 30 years (McGowan et al., 2000).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, physical activity programs for young people are most likely to be effective when: they emphasize enjoyable participation in physical activities that are easily done throughout life; give young people the skills and confidence they need to be physically active; promote physical activity through all components of a coordinated school health program and develop links between school and community programs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000)

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A Variety of Programs Respond to These Needs

An estimated 39% of kindergarteners through third-graders receive some form of non-parental care before and/or after school on a weekly basis, equivalent to a total of 6.1 million children in primary school in the U.S. who spend an average of 14 hours per week in these care arrangements. 17% are in relative care, 14% in center-based programs, and 10% in non-relative care, 2% of children in this age group reported to be in self-care before and/or after school (Brimhall & Reaney, 1999).

Unlike preschool-aged children, school-age children typically attend more than one after school program or activity in the course of a week. The 1990 National Child Care Survey--the most recent information available--found that over three-fourths of elementary school children with employed mothers attend at least two different arrangements (Hofferth et al., 1991).

Almost 30% of public schools and 50% of private schools offered before- and/or after-school care in 1993-1994, compared to only 15 and 33% in 1987-1988. These programs are least available in rural areas (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999).

The national movement toward high-stakes testing is increasing the focus on supporting academic skill development during out-of-school time. Forty-nine states have performance standards for elementary and secondary education; 26 have exit exams in place or in process; 19 publicly identify failing schools (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2000).

Children Can Benefit From Participation in High Quality Programs

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin reported in 1999 that children who attended more days of an after-school program were rated by their classroom teachers as having better work habits and better interpersonal skills compared with children who attended fewer days. Children who attended more days were also less likely to endorse aggression as a response to peer conflict, and their school attendance was better (Vandell & Pierce, 1999).

Research indicates that children who attend high quality programs have better peer

relations, emotional adjustment, conflict resolution skills, grades, and conduct in school compared to their peers who are not in after school programs (Baker and Witt, 1996; Kahne, Nagaoka & Brown, 1999; Posner & Vandell, 1999).

Children who attend programs spend more time in learning opportunities, academic and enrichment activities, and spend less time watching television than their peers (Posner & Vandell, 1994).

In one study, children who attended an after school program missed fewer days of school, had better homework completion, better school behavior, and higher test scores. Parents reported that they were able to work more hours and had more flexible schedules (Hamilton & Klein, 1998; Ohio Hunger Task Force, 1999).

Participation in sports is linked to an increase in girls' self-esteem, positive body image, self-confidence, and sense of competence, as well as a decreased incidence of depression, pregnancy, and smoking initiation (Girls Report, 1998).

Students who spend one to four hours per week in extracurricular activities are 49% less likely to use drugs and 37% less likely to become teen parents than students who do not participate in extracurricular activities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996).

Higher Participation is Linked to More Positive Outcomes

One study found that, compared to peers with lower attendance rates, children who attend after-school programs regularly have higher grades and self-esteem. It found that those children who attend programs more frequently achieve more positive outcomes (Baker and Witt, 1996).

One study found that program children had fewer school absences, better conflict management skills, and better work habits at school than non-program children from the same high crime neighborhoods, and those who attended more frequently had more pronounced effects (Vandell and Pierce, 1999).

The UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation found that students with at least four years participation in the LA's BEST afterschool program had better subsequent attendance, which led to higher academic achievement on

standardized tests of mathematics, reading and language arts (Afterschool Alliance, June 2000).

According to a recent report by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, after-school programs have been proven to reduce crime, prevent other risky behaviors, and teach values and skills (Taggart, 1995).

Research showed that every dollar spent on the Quantum Opportunities after-school program returned \$3.04 in benefits to participants and the public, without even accounting for a six-fold drop in crime by participating boys. Boys and girls left out of the program were 50% more likely to have children during high school years and twice as likely to drop out of high school. Boys and girls who participated in the programs were two and a half times more likely to go on to further education after high school (Taggart, 1995).

Costs of Care

Fees for programs for school-age children vary. The national average cost for child care is \$286 per month, and ranges from \$209 in Mississippi to \$370 in Massachusetts (Urban Institute, 2000).

Nearly half of America's working families with a child under the age of 13 have child care expenses that consume on average 9% of their monthly earnings. Families with earnings below the federal poverty level who pay for child care spend an average of 23% of their monthly earnings on childcare (Urban Institute, 2000).

Child care costs can affect children's development, by determining not only the type, but also the quality of care that the family can afford (Urban Institute, 2000).

Early findings from the MOST Evaluation estimated that a full year program costs approximately \$4,000 per child; costs drop to \$3,000 when space and utilities are donated. Administrative time and other in-kind donations are excluded from these estimates. (Halpern et al, 1999).

Public Support is Growing

Sixty-seven percent of Americans are ready to forego a tax cut to provide children with good early childhood development programs and quality after-school programs (Fight Crime, Invest in Kids, 2001).

More than one-third of voters believe that the biggest problem facing children today is that they are alone and unsupervised. This concern has grown in recent years, increasing to 38% this year from 26% in the last year's after-school survey. (Afterschool Alliance, 2000).

In a survey of police chiefs, 86% said expanding after-school and educational childcare programs would greatly reduce youth crime and violence. Ninety-one percent of police chiefs said America will pay later in crime, welfare, and other costs, if greater investments in after-school and educational child care aren't made now (Fight Crime, Invest in Kids, 1999).

Public and Private Funding is Increasing

In the past five years, the Federal Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Center grants has increased from \$1 million to \$846 million and will be providing funding for approximately 6,600 schools serving 1,600 communities across the states (US Department of Education, 2001).

At least 26 states are increasing funding for after-school programs and opportunities. At least 30 states are seeing greater involvement from schools in extending learning during the after school hours (National Governor's Association, 1999).

In Fiscal Year 99, 1.8 million children received subsidies for child care from 4.6 billion dollars of federal funds (Child Care and Development Block Grant). Thirty-five percent or 600,000 children were of school age, from 6 to 13 years old (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).